



Recommendations and next steps for WSDOT

- New Stop Evaluation – Auburn study findings will be incorporated into the draft 2013 State Rail Plan.
- WSDOT and ODOT will initiate a public process in late 2014 to formalize a new stop policy for the corridor.
- WSDOT should seek funding and resources needed to explore new operating models to increase ridership and manage costs. This analysis would investigate service changes such as eliminating stops or implementing a limited stop service to gain travel time benefits for the corridor.

Interim policy

Until a formal process is adopted, the following policies will guide consideration of new stops on Amtrak Cascades:

- Washington and Oregon are working to manage their respective services together as a unified corridor. Both the WSDOT and ODOT operating budgets are very constrained: the WSDOT operating budget for Amtrak Cascades was cut by \$1 million in 2013-2015. The agencies will work together to reduce station costs and implement other cost saving alternatives.
- WSDOT and ODOT will evaluate proposals to add station stops based on benefits and disadvantages for the entire service. Evaluation criteria include: Consistent with State Rail Plan; Operational Feasibility; Customer Demand; Station Suitability; Interconnectivity Benefits; and Fiscal Viability.
- The addition of a station stop should not degrade service or add cost for WSDOT, ODOT, Sound Transit, BNSF, UP, Amtrak or other partners in intercity passenger rail service.
- Rail planning budgets at WSDOT and ODOT are not sufficient to complete new stop studies without additional funds. Proponents should provide funding for new stop evaluation studies.
- Major service changes will not be implemented until after 2017 due to construction and service outcome agreement commitments.

WSDOT will continue working on these criteria in cooperation with Oregon, British Columbia and other corridor partners to ensure a fair, objective process for considering requests for new stops.

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Washington State  
Department of Transportation



CASCADES®

# New stop evaluation – Auburn



The Washington State Legislature directed the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to study the feasibility of an Amtrak Cascades stop at Auburn, and to conduct a market analysis of adding or changing stops on the route.

This opportunity comes at a challenging time for the program: while we are implementing \$800 million in capital projects that will greatly improve the service, we are also facing increasing operating costs that will strain our budget. It is against this backdrop that the New Stop Evaluation – Auburn study provides an analysis of a potential Auburn stop based on benefits and disadvantages for the service, corridor-wide.

This approach is a first step toward establishing a transparent process for evaluating the many proposals for new stops. This technique will empower decision makers to consider how proposed changes to the service will affect the state's goals to increase ridership and manage costs.



## Amtrak Cascades

Amtrak Cascades provides intercity passenger rail between Eugene, Oregon and Vancouver, British Columbia, also serving the major metropolitan areas of Seattle and Portland. It is sponsored by WSDOT, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and Amtrak. The Amtrak Cascades service is an important part of the state’s multi-modal transportation system: intercity passenger rail provides a vital alternative to travel on interstates and highways, and, as a green form of transportation with the lowest emissions for long-distance travel, the service is part of the state’s strategy for reducing vehicle miles traveled.

WSDOT is investing nearly \$800 million in federal high-speed rail funds to deliver critical rail infrastructure improvements, expanded travel choices and economic growth across our state. The majority of the funding comes from the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). These improvements will result in:

- Two additional daily round trips between Seattle and Portland, for a total six, by 2017.
- 88 percent on-time reliability.
- Reduced travel time between Seattle and Portland.

In order for the state to endorse a service change and consider adding a stop, the change should further the state’s goals for increasing ridership and managing costs for the Amtrak Cascades program. We must demonstrate the change will not degrade the service – particularly, travel time reductions and reliability improvements to be produced by capital investments.

## Approach

The legislature directed WSDOT to study the feasibility of adding a stop at Auburn. Based on criteria developed collaboratively by WSDOT and city of Auburn, the analysis provides an assessment of the comparative benefits and disadvantages of adding a stop at Sound Transit’s Auburn Sounder Station starting in 2017. At the request of city of Auburn, the stop was also evaluated separately as a “skip stop,” which assumes some trips stop at Tukwila and others at Auburn.

Evaluation criteria for changes in station stops	
Criteria	Key Questions
Policy	Is the proposal consistent with state policies and the state rail plans for Washington and Oregon?
Operational feasibility	Are changes consistent with the Service Outcome Agreement? How do the changes affect other trains?
Customer demand	How many riders can be expected to use the new station? How will total ridership change for the corridor?
Station suitability	What site changes would be needed to serve Amtrak Cascades safely and efficiently?
Interconnectivity benefits	In what ways would the new station improve multi-modal connectivity for passengers?
Fiscal viability	Based on anticipated costs and revenues, is the effect of the new station positive, neutral or negative?

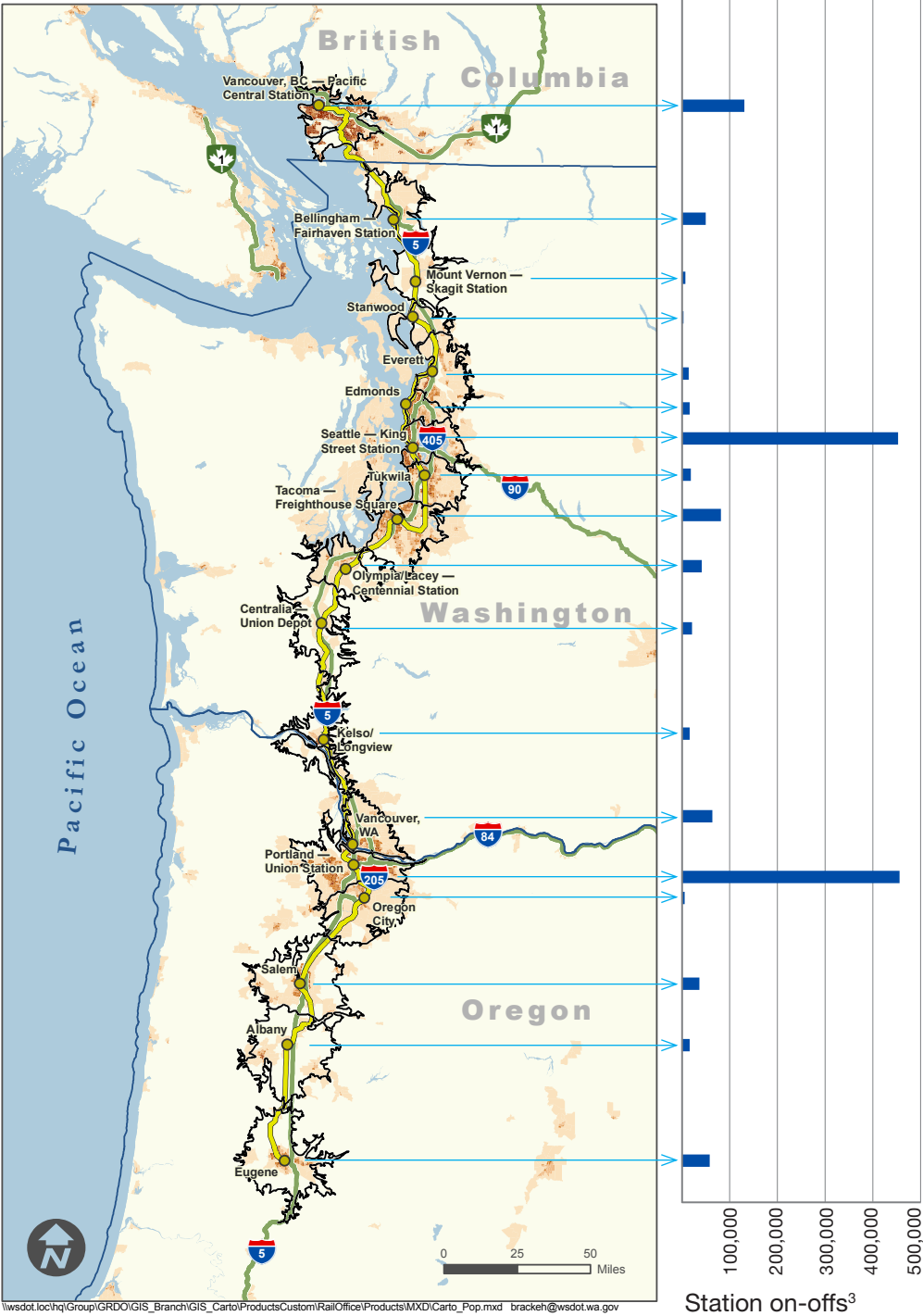
## Results – adding a stop at Auburn

While Auburn has many attributes that could be attractive for an Amtrak Cascades station, the analysis suggests that adding a stop at Auburn does not provide corridor benefits at this time. If the city of Auburn wishes to investigate further, the city should take the lead in developing a business plan (with support from WSDOT, Amtrak, Sound Transit and other partners) that shows how losses would be avoided without additional cost to the state. The effort must include coordination with Sound Transit to identify any improvements or conditions that would be required for use of the facility for Amtrak Cascades.

Scenarios					
<b>Baseline Scenario - Funded Service in 2017:</b> When capital improvements are completed in 2017, existing stations on the Seattle to Portland segment (including Tukwila) will be served with 12 trains daily, for six total round trips.					
<b>Scenario 1:</b> Add the Auburn Sounder Station to all round trips, in addition to the existing stop at Tukwila. Amtrak Cascades would stop at each station in the Seattle to Portland segment 12 times daily, for six total round trips.			<b>Scenario 2:</b> Alternate stops between Tukwila and Auburn. This is also known as the“skip-stop” scenario. Amtrak Cascades service at Tukwila would be reduced to eight trains daily, or four round trips. Auburn would be served with four trains daily, or two round trips.		
Scenario 1: (Add Auburn to all round trips)			Scenario 2: (Tukwila: 4 round trips, Auburn: 2 round trips)		
Operational feasibility	<span>✗</span>	<b>Does not meet requirements</b> – Not compatible with service outcome agreement because new stop added schedule time between Seattle and Portland.	Operational feasibility	<span>○</span>	A coordinated passenger train schedule is feasible and impacts to freight rail traffic are negligible.
Customer demand	<span>○</span>	No significant changes system-wide based on the analysis. Small changes in large through-markets, like Seattle to Portland, outweigh added ridership at Auburn.	Customer demand	<span>▼</span>	The “skip stop” provides fewer daily round trips at Tukwila and only two at Auburn. This is a lower level of service for customers, resulting in lower ridership.
Station suitability	<span>◆</span>	Risk: although the Sound Transit station already meets many of the needs for Amtrak Cascades, Sound Transit must approve use of the station and may require additional measures.	Station suitability	<span>◆</span>	Risk: although the Sound Transit station already meets many of the needs for Amtrak Cascades, Sound Transit must approve use of the station and may require additional measures.
Inter-connectivity	<span>▲</span>	Population near stations increased: within 10 minutes increased by 157,000, and within 30 minutes increased by 31,000.	Inter-connectivity	<span>▲</span>	Improved access near Auburn is tempered by losses to ridership and societal benefits system-wide.
Fiscal viability	<span>○</span>	No significant changes. Minor loss in revenue, minor decrease in benefit/cost ratio and farebox recovery.	Fiscal viability	<span>▼</span>	Lower ridership produces a loss in annual revenue. As a result, farebox recovery is lower and the required taxpayer subsidy would be greater.

◆ Risk    ✗ Does Not Meet Requirements    ▲ Benefit    ○ Neutral Result    ▼ Negative Result

## Amtrak Cascades population densities, service areas and passenger on-offs



The “catchment area” for Amtrak Cascades includes areas within a 30-minute drive of existing stations (or less). The existing catchment area encompasses approximately 3 million jobs and 8.7 million residents.

An Amtrak Cascades stop would extend the existing catchment area to the east and southeast of Auburn. The extended catchment area encompasses approximately 7,000 jobs and 31,000 residents.

### Existing stops and 2010/2011 population density

People per square mile<sup>1</sup>

- 0 - 100
- 100 - 2,000
- 2,000 - 4,000
- 4,000 - 6,000
- 6,000 - 8,000
- over 8,000

30-minute drive time to nearest station<sup>2</sup>

Amtrak Cascades rail station

Amtrak Cascades rail corridor

State/country boundary



<sup>1</sup> Population density derived from 2010 US Census and 2011 Statistics Canada

<sup>2</sup> Rail station drive times were calculated using ESRI StreetMap North America 2012 data with standard impedances.

<sup>3</sup> 2012 Ridership by station based on the number of passengers who got on or off the train.